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The Metamorphosis

Franz Kafka

Summary:

Gregor is given some freedom to move about the house at night, as pity comes over the family. He father becomes lazy in that his work clothes become his unwashed everyday clothes. Gregor discovers that his mother has a knack for sewing and his sister with French and the violin. He feels some sense of pride in his sister, knowing her true potential. However, the parents are soon to object any idea Grete going to any school for playing the instrument.

Gregor also comes to learn that his family has been selling jewelry in order to make a few extra bucks. The family fires their current cleaning lady and hires a new, older, white-haired woman to do some housecleaning. Gregor also finds that Grete no longer will care for him at all. In fact, she resents everything about him. She is quick to understand that Gregor is a waste of space and sees no further need for him. This of course puts much stress on Gregor, now knowing that he is hated.

People come and go in and out of the story, but they all have one thing in common. Each person fails to realize why Gregor is still allowed in the home. Each character feels as though Gregor should not still be kept around. One night, he overhears his parents explaining to Grete that the only reason that Gregor is still around is because he doesn’t realize the pain he is causing the family. Gregor, unaware of this pain, is heartbroken and shell-shocked. Lying in his bed that night, he dies. The family eventually moves into a smaller apartment and has money to go around.

Analysis:

I find this bit to be very interesting. Gregor feels as though he has a tight grasp around reality and the thoughts and feelings of his family, but he couldn’t be more wrong. His family wishes that they could rid of him, but realize they cannot because he is blood. I feel that it is rather curious that when he feels most confident that his presence around the house is ignored, he is proved wrong. At this very time, he is shut down and realizes that if he was dead, his family comes survive and thrive. It is eye-opening for Gregor, but sometimes the loss of innocence hits harder than a bag of bricks.

Application:

The inherent human characteristics that span time and culture in this bit are rather punctual. When Gregor is exposed to the real world of the truth, a wave of guilt falls over him. In this, guilt is seen as the human characteristic spanning time and culture. When placed into certain situations that are out of our control, but affect other people negatively, we as humans feel guilt. It is a commonality among people to feel guilty for wrongdoing someone, but in Gregor’s case, he had no control. Lastly, the inherent human characteristic that spans time and culture is guilt in unfortunate social situations.